

WASHINGTON (July 8) – Congressman Spencer Bachus (AL-6) today applauded the restoration of student and teacher religious expression rights that had come under attack by the American Civil Liberties Union.

A settlement has been announced in a three-year legal battle in the Santa Rosa County, Florida School District that called into question the use of such customary expressions as “God Bless.”

Congressman Bachus signed a letter of support to two administrators in the district who were summoned to trial and threatened with fines, jail time, and a loss of their retirement benefits for offering a short blessing at a booster club luncheon.

“The tradition of offering prayer in America has become so interwoven into our nation’s spiritual heritage that to charge someone criminally for engaging in such an innocent practice would astonish the men who founded this country on religious liberty,” stated the letter signed by Bachus and Members of the Congressional Prayer Caucus.

The Liberty Counsel, which brought suit in a U.S. District Court to protect religious expression, announced the resolution of the litigation. According to a news release from the organization, the settlement agreement includes the following terms:

**Students will be allowed to voluntarily pray, submit religious answers in homework, and freely participate in private, after-school, religious programs. Teachers will now be able to pray at school during their break times, pray during school events in a nonofficial capacity, attend and fully participate in baccalaureate services, have a Bible on their desk, wear religious jewelry, assign readings from the Bible to students when relevant to nonreligious academic assignments, and more. "God bless" is no longer forbidden.**

Congressman Bachus, who is a cosponsor of legislation that would permit voluntary prayer in public schools said, “It was outrageous from the beginning that teachers, administrators, and students could be harassed for engaging in the most innocent forms of religious expression. Prayer should not be criminalized.”

To view the letter of support that Congressman Bachus signed to Principal Frank Lay and Athletic Director Robert Freeman, [click here.](#)